

FACT SHEET



Railroad Avenue Site West Des Moines, Iowa

October 2000

INTRODUCTION

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to evaluate information received from sampling conducted at the Railroad Avenue site in West Des Moines, Iowa. This site was formerly known as the West Des Moines Water Works Municipal Water Supply Well #13 site. EPA has collected soil, ground water, sediment and sewer samples in an approximately 1.1 square-mile area bounded on the south by the lakes in Raccoon River Park, on the west roughly by 19th Street, on the north by Holiday Park, and on the east by 5th Street and the Raccoon River.

Twenty-two municipal water wells that supply water to the residents of West Des Moines are located in this area. Several wells have been taken off-line as a result of contamination. The city's municipal water supply remains safe for public use.

SITE BACKGROUND

In 1993, a routine water distribution sample collected by the Water Works was found to contain a low concentration of cis-1,2-dichloroethylene (DCE). The city sampled wells 12 and 13 in July 1994, because they were the most recent wells placed on-line for the West Des Moines water supply system. Benzene was found in well 12 and cis-1,2-DCE was found in well 13 at levels above drinking water standards. The wells had been sampled previously in 1991 and no contamination was found. After the contamination was found, the two wells were taken off-line.

COMMUNITY MEETING RAILROAD AVENUE SITE

EPA invites you to attend a community meeting on the Railroad Avenue Site. EPA staff will describe the site investigation, what is known about the extent of the contamination, next steps in the process and answer questions about the site. The meeting will be held:

**Tuesday, October 24, 2000
7:00 p.m.**

**Learning Resource Center
Community Room
3550 George M. Mills Civic Parkway
West Des Moines, Iowa**

For more information contact:

**Diane Huffman
Community Involvement Coordinator
1-800-223-0425**

The site was brought to the attention of EPA's Superfund program after the Iowa Department of Natural Resources found contamination during an investigation they were conducting near well 13. EPA conducted sampling in 1997 and 1999 and found benzene, cis-1,2-DCE, trichloroethylene (TCE), and other volatile organic compounds in soil and ground water samples.

Additional sampling found the highest concentrations of cis-1,2-DCE in ground water in an area near 12th and Maple Street and 5th and Railroad Avenue. It appears the ground water contamination extends east beyond the area where samples were taken. TCE, benzene, and arsenic were also found in the ground water at levels above drinking water standards.

Numerous soil samples were also taken in the study area in an attempt to locate the source of the contamination. While contaminants were found in some of the samples, no primary source area was identified.

Five of the city's municipal water supply wells have been taken off-line as a result of contamination. EPA's most recent sampling results show no contaminants at levels above drinking water standards in the municipal wells that are currently on-line.

CONTAMINANTS

TCE is a solvent, used to remove grease from metal parts. It is also a component of other chemicals. Cis-1,2-DCE is used to produce solvents and chemical mixtures. It also occurs as a result of the natural decomposition or degradation of several other chemicals, including TCE and perchloroethylene. Benzene is a widely used chemical found in gasoline and other petroleum products. Benzene is also used to make some types of rubber, lubricants, dyes, detergents, drugs and pesticides. Arsenic, a naturally occurring metal, is used in pesticides and wood preservatives. It is also a by-product of metal making processes.

SUPERFUND PROGRAM

EPA has conducted the investigation at this site under the Superfund program. In 1980, Congress established the Superfund program in response to growing concerns over human health and environmental risks posed by hazardous waste sites. Superfund locates, investigates, and cleans up hazardous waste sites.

After a hazardous waste site is discovered, actions taken to address the site can fall under two programs, removal or remedial. Removal actions are generally short-term actions taken to address an immediate health or environmental threat. Remedial actions are long-term actions taken at sites that require extensive cleanup.

EPA uses the Hazardous Ranking System to evaluate and prioritize sites. The most significant sites are placed on EPA's National Priorities List (NPL). EPA will evaluate the Railroad Avenue site to determine if it qualifies to be proposed for the NPL.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Documents describing EPA's investigations at the site can be found at EPA's office in Kansas City, Kansas, and the following location:

West Des Moines Public Library
4000 George M. Mills Civic Parkway
West Des Moines, Iowa

If you have questions about this fact sheet or need additional information regarding the site, please contact:

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